



Joint Field Office  
75 N. Fair Oaks Ave., 3rd Floor  
Pasadena, CA 91103

**FEMA**

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FEMA/OES: 626-431-3178  
SBA: 916-216-9915

# Recovery News

## WHEN HOUSING OPTIONS ARE LIMITED OR NONEXISTENT

**PASADENA, Calif.** — The recent wildfires hit remote areas of California hard, compounding challenges faced by disaster victims. One of the thorniest—and perhaps the most critical—is finding safe, affordable housing for everyone affected by the fire.

Housing specialists with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) talk with each victim needing housing assistance. Together they review housing in the area and discuss the applicant's long-term housing plans.

The goal is to find suitable rental properties in the local area. Moving into an existing resource allows the family to quickly re-establish their home. Contributing to the local economy is also a positive outcome of the process.

A few fire victims in remote areas were completely burned out or their homes were not livable. With no other viable housing options, FEMA brought in mobile homes and is working with applicants to find a viable solution. Currently FEMA is working with 22 people.

Before a mobile home can be delivered, however, several things must come into place. Locating and preparing the site is essential. It must:

- Be accessible by road.
- Be inspected to make sure it is of adequate size (FEMA mobile homes are over 64 ft.).
- Meet federal, state and local housing guidelines regarding safety, occupancy, zoning and environmental laws.
- Have acceptable water, sewer and electrical hook-ups available.
- Be outside a floodplain.
- Be cleared of debris and prepared for the mobile home.

Once the site is ready, FEMA will bring in the mobile home and begin the installation process. While FEMA works with local utility companies, it does not control their scheduling priorities. The applicant can move in only when all utilities are in place.

*FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.*

*The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state-agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES is also responsible for maintaining the State Emergency Plan and coordinating California's preparedness, mitigation and recovery efforts.*

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*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 1-800-462-7585.*

*SBA is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private non-profit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 800-659-2955.*

*Temporary housing assistance from FEMA does not require that an applicant file for an SBA loan. However, an applicant must complete an SBA loan application to be eligible for additional assistance under the part of the Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses. There are other ONA grants such as public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses that do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan to be eligible. FEMA will process applications for housing assistance regardless of whether the applicant has applied for an SBA loan, and eligibility determinations for applicants requesting FEMA's temporary housing assistance will not be held up because the applicant has or has not filled out an SBA application.*

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